

March 28, 2019

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chairwoman
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building
Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole
Ranking Member
1016 Longworth House Office
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman DeLauro and Ranking Member Cole:

We are deeply concerned about excessive wait times and declining service at the Social Security Administration (SSA). We urge you to support robust funding in FY2020 so that SSA can work to reduce the unconscionable delays faced every day by Americans who are trying to access their earned benefits.

Social Security is an essential component of economic security for American workers; almost all workers are contributing to Social Security and earnings its benefits. The income Social Security provides is vital for retirees, families who have lost a breadwinner, and workers who have suffered a career-ending injury or illness. It is impossible to overstate the importance of the program to the 62 million people who are receiving benefits. For 6 in 10 retirees, Social Security provides the majority of their income. And nearly 4 in 10 widows have almost no income other than Social Security.

Despite the importance of Social Security and its strong level of public support, funding to operate Social Security fell by nearly 9 percent from 2010 to 2018, after accounting for inflation. Yet over the same time span, the number of individuals who are receiving benefits increased by nearly 15 percent as the baby boom generation aged. This increase has led to a predictable and justifiable need for higher funding for SSA, so it can serve more people.

Because of budget cuts, SSA has been forced to close offices or reduce the hours of operation at those left open, leading to lengthy delays. In 2017, the majority of callers to SSA's 800-number could not get through because of busy signals and long hold times. In 2018, the situation was even worse. And each year, thousands die waiting for a decision on whether they are eligible for disability benefits, while many more endure years without income, in the process exhausting their life savings and even losing their homes.

These are problems that can only be resolved by providing increased funding for SSA. For example, dedicated funding provided by Congress in recent years to reduce delays in disability benefit appeals has helped SSA make progress: average waiting times have gone from a high of

over 600 days in 2017 to 534 days so far this year. But this is still far too high. Without more robust overall funding, waiting times, benefit delays, and service problems will only grow worse – something that none of our constituents want.

Social Security is essential to American families. We urge you to support more resources for SSA, so Americans can receive the benefits they are counting on.

Sincerely,

SUSAN WILD
Member of Congress

JOHN LARSON
Member of Congress

JAN SCHAKOWSKY
Member of Congress

DORIS MATSUI
Member of Congress